

I (WE) CLAIM:

1. A method for automated replenishment notification for manufacturing pieces, the method comprising:
 - (a) positioning manufacturing pieces on a gravity feed rack;
 - (b) sensing a removal of the manufacturing pieces; and
 - (c) electronically notifying in response to (b).
2. The method of Claim 1 wherein (a) comprises positioning a plurality of kanbans each having a plurality of manufacturing pieces and wherein (b) comprises sensing removal of a kanban.
3. The method of Claim 1 wherein (b) comprises sensing when a position along the gravity feed rack is free of manufacturing pieces.
4. The method of Claim 1 wherein (b) comprises sensing with a mechanical switch.
5. The method of Claim 1 wherein (c) comprises sending an e-mail to a supplier of the manufacturing pieces in response to (b) without user activation of the sending.
6. The method of Claim 1 wherein (c) comprises automatically sending an order for more manufacturing pieces;
further comprising:
 - (d) sending a copy of the order to at least one of: a purchaser, a manufacturing supervisor and a warehouse person.
7. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

(d) sensing a lack of replacement of the manufacturing pieces after a time period from one of (b) and (c); and

(e) electronically notifying in response to (d).

8. The method of Claim 7 wherein (e) comprises electronically notifying at least one of: a supplier and a manufacturing supervisor.

9. The method of Claim 1 wherein (c) is performed in response to (b) after sensing a lack of a replacement manufacturing piece within a time period.

10. The method of Claim 1 wherein (a) comprises positioning a plurality of the manufacturing pieces to sequentially feed to a lower position on the gravity feed rack and wherein (b) comprises sensing at a position higher than the lower position on the gravity feed rack.

11. A system for automated replenishment notification for manufacturing pieces, the system comprising:

a gravity feed rack;

a sensor adjacent to the gravity feed rack, the sensor positioned to sense a presence of a manufacturing piece on the gravity feed rack; and

a processor connected with the sensor, the processor operable to generate a notification in response to a signal from the sensor indicating a lack of the manufacturing piece and operable to communicate the notification to another processor.

12. The system of Claim 11 wherein the gravity feed rack comprises a plurality of rollers, the sensor positioned between two to of the plurality of rollers.

13. The system of Claim 11 wherein the sensor is positioned to sense at a location along the gravity feed rack such that the lack of the manufacturing piece is sensed while another manufacturing piece is present below the location.

14. The system of Claim 11 wherein the sensor is a spring activated mechanical switch.
15. The system of Claim 11 wherein the processor is operable to generate and send an e-mail order as the notification.
16. The system of Claim 11 wherein the processor is operable to sense a lack of replacement of the manufacturing piece after a time period in response to the sensor and is operable to generate an additional notification in response to the lack of replacement.
17. A method for automated replenishment notification for manufacturing pieces, the method comprising:
- (a) positioning a first type of manufacturing pieces on a first rack;
 - (b) positioning a second type of manufacturing pieces on a second rack;
 - (c) automatic sensing for removal of manufacturing pieces from the first and second racks;
 - (d) electronically communicating a first order for the first type of manufacturing pieces where removal of the first type of manufacturing pieces is sensed; and
 - (e) electronically communicating a second order for the second type of manufacturing pieces where removal of the second type of manufacturing pieces is sensed;
- wherein the first order is independent of removal of the second type of manufacturing pieces and the second order is independent of removal of the first type of manufacturing pieces.
18. The method of Claim 17 wherein (d) and (e) comprise sending first and second e-mails, respectively, to first and second suppliers, respectively, the first supplier different than the second supplier, (d) and (e) performed without user activation of the sending.

19. The method of Claim 17 further comprising:

- (f) sensing a lack of replacement of at least one of the first and second type of manufacturing pieces after a time period; and
- (g) electronically communicating a reminder.

20. A system for automated replenishment notification for manufacturing pieces, the system comprising:

- a plurality of racks;
- a plurality of sensors adjacent to the plurality of racks, each sensor positioned to sense a presence of a manufacturing piece on a respective one of the plurality of racks; and
- a processor connected with the plurality of sensors, the processor operable to generate orders independently for each of the racks in response to the sensors indicating a lack of manufacturing pieces on the racks, the processor operable to communicate the orders to at least one other processor.

21. A method for automated replenishment notification for manufacturing pieces, the method comprising:

- (a) positioning manufacturing pieces on a rack;
- (b) sensing a removal of the manufacturing pieces;
- (c) electronically notifying in response to (b);
- (d) sensing a lack of replacement of the manufacturing pieces after a time period from one of (b) and (c); and
- (e) electronically notifying in response to (d).

22. The method of Claim 21 wherein (c) comprises sending an e-mail to a supplier of the manufacturing pieces in response to (b) without user activation of the sending.

23. The method of Claim 21 wherein (c) comprises automatically sending an order for more manufacturing pieces;

further comprising:

(f) sending a copy of the order to at least one of: a purchaser, a manufacturing supervisor and a warehouse person.

24. The method of Claim 21 wherein (e) comprises electronically notifying at least one of: a supplier and a manufacturing supervisor.

25. A system for automated replenishment notification for manufacturing pieces, the system comprising:

a rack;

a sensor adjacent to the rack, the sensor positioned to sense a presence of a manufacturing piece on the rack; and

a processor connected with the sensor, the processor operable to generate a notification in response to a signal from the sensor indicating a lack of the manufacturing piece, operable to communicate the notification to another processor, operable to sense a lack of replacement of the manufacturing piece after a time period in response to the sensor and operable to generate an additional notification in response to the lack of replacement.

26. The system of Claim 25 wherein the rack comprises a gravity feed rack, the notification is an order to a supplier with a first copy to a purchaser and the additional notification is a reminder to the supplier and a second copy to the purchaser.